

**REPORT TO:
THE GOVERNOR'S HMONG RESETTLEMENT ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

**SUBMITTED BY:
THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE**

August 20, 2004

The Mental Health Committee held its first meeting via teleconference on August 17, 2004. Chairman and Task Force Member Andy Benedetto, Task Force Members and Committee Members Phyllis Bermingham and Peter Yang, and ad hoc Committee Members Tom Dodge (Sheboygan County) and Karen Fink (Global Health Institute) participated. Five other members were not in attendance, partially due to communication difficulties experienced in attempting to organize this first teleconference meeting.

The committee agreed to focus initially on short term needs of new arrivals and to focus on long- term needs in coming months. After identifying and briefly discussing several issues, committee members agreed that the following three issue areas and recommendations were of critical initial importance. These recommendations also have the advantage of being implemented without significant expenditures of time or money.

1. **Issue:** Mental health issues need to be identified as soon as possible, using culturally competent mental health screening tools. If mental health screening tools are made available to those doing the health screenings (mostly county health departments), mental health issues can be identified immediately and new arrivals with documented need can be referred to mental health providers for further assessment. At least one such tool exists – **THE HMONG MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING ASSESSMENT**.

Recommendation: Task Force members should be aware of this screening tool, identify any others that exist, and disseminate these mental health screening tools to be used at the refugee health screening.

2. **Issue:** Many of the new arrivals have little understanding of the concept of mental health. In some instances, painful mental health issues may present themselves in the form of somatic complaints; in most cases, the individuals may not be able to identify what they are experiencing as a mental health issue.

Recommendation: In order to help new arrivals understand the concept of mental health, a videotape entitled **MENTAL HEALTH IN THE HMONG COMMUNITY**, developed by Hmong National Development Inc. to explain mental health issues to the Hmong population, should be widely distributed throughout Wisconsin. The committee requests guidance from the Task Force in distributing this video.

3. Issue: The committee discussed the possibility of creating a web site similar to the one established by the Hmong Mental Health Institute that lost funding last year when federal resettlement budgets were cut. This web site provided two functions that would be of great value to the new arrivals.

- It provided an updated listing of culturally competent providers of mental health services throughout the state and a means to contact them.
- It provided a secure chat room for therapist to discuss their cases.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that this site be re-established and maintained.

The next committee meeting will be an all day meeting in Madison on September 15. The location will be announced later.